

Open VCT Session on the Implementation and Commemoration of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325

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Tomorrow (5 October), the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) is scheduled to convene an open session on the implementation and commemoration of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325. The session is expected to take place under the theme '20 Years of Resolution 1325: An Opportunity to Scale up Women's Actions for Silencing the Guns in Africa'.

Commissioner for Peace and Security, Smail Chergui, is scheduled to make a statement. The PSC is also expected to receive a briefing from the AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Bineta Diop and the representative of UN Women. Others expected to address the PSC include the Minister for Women and Human Rights Development of the Federal Republic of Somalia, Dega Yasin, and the Chairperson of FEMWISE.

This would be the first VTC session to be fully open since the PSC started operating virtually since April 2020. The PSC will receive statements from participants of the session.

Tomorrow's session serves as an opportunity to take stock of the 20 years journey of this landmark resolution. The objectives of the session as set out in the concept note are: assess the challenges and opportunities for the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Africa in the 20 years of 1325, analyse the socio-economic and financial impact

of COVID19 on women and girls particularly in the context of armed conflict situations, recognize the role of women and women-led organizations in Silencing the Guns and Building Peace in Africa, provide space for African women organizations and women leaders in the area of peace and security to advocate for enhanced delivery on the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda.

Apart from its recognition of the differentiated impact of conflict on women and girls, an important feature of UNSC Resolution 1325 is its emphasis on the vital role women play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. It underscores the importance of women's full involvement and equal participation in all efforts made for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. It is expected that presenters will highlight the role of Resolution 1325 in raising the profile of the women, peace and security agenda and serving as catalyst for advocacy and institutional and policy changes. Despite the achievements registered, serious challenges remain. Chief among these are the disproportionate impact of conflicts on women including the deliberate use of abductions and sexual violence against women and the slow pace of progress in the level of representation and participation of women in peace processes.

In this context the session may address the challenges around the limited involvement of women in peace processes, mediation and their absence in leadership positions. As a recent UN Women analysis pointed out, despite two decades of advocacy, analysis and policy measures, women's inclusion in formal, high-level mediation processes has long been difficult to achieve. Although women's participation in peace process increases sustainability of peace, in the past 20 years women constituted only 3 per cent of mediators and only 4 per cent of signatories in major peace processes. It is also important to note that beyond increasing the number of women, it is crucial to ensure their active, meaningful and direct

engagement in peace process, including in positions of influence. Another issue concerns the provision of effective accountability and legal redress for violations inflicted on women.

One of the mechanisms to track the implementation of Resolution 1325 has been through the adoption of National Action Plans (NAPs) by governments and it may be an issue of major importance that could be noted by the PSC. As indicated by the Special Envoy about 30 African Member States have now adopted NAPs and six Regional Economic Communities have adopted Regional Action Plans. Despite the adoption and wide recognition attributed to Resolution 1325 both globally and in Africa, implementation of its provisions is still lacking. Many Member States are still yet to allocate sufficient budget for the implementation of the resolution and NAPs (in case of those countries that have already adopted NAPs).

It is to be recalled that at its 887th session in 2019, the PSC received a report from Diop on the implementation of the WPS agenda in Africa based on the Continental Results Framework (CRF), which was adopted by the PSC in May 2018. It is expected that in her briefing Diop is expected to provide update on the follow up to the outcome of the 887th session of the PSC, which requested her to undertake consultations with member states.

It would be of importance for the PSC to also note that 2020 marks the 10th anniversary of PSC's decision at its 223rd session to make WPS a standing thematic agenda of its annual program of work. Beyond the commemorative sessions of Resolution 1325 which the PSC usually convenes in October, the Council has been holding regular open sessions on women in armed conflicts since March 2010 following Assembly decision Assembly/AU/Dec.275(XIV). Tomorrow's session accordingly offers an opportunity for reflecting on the evolution of the WPS agenda in the work of the PSC. In this respect, some of the notable achievements registered include the appointment of

the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, the establishment of the Gender Peace and Security Program and the launch of FemWise.

With regards to the 2020 AU theme and women's contribution to the full realisation of- "Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development", those delivering briefings, most notably, Diop are expected to highlight the role that women have played in mobilizing action for conflict prevention, management and resolution in various conflict settings and the contribution of the convenings and solidarity missions that focused on peace processes. Also, of interest in this context is the intervention from Yasin in terms of the concrete experience of women and their role in peace efforts at the national level in the context of the situation in Somalia. It would also be interesting for the PSC to reflect on how the full implementation of the WPS agenda in Africa could advance the achievement of the AU theme of the year.

In light of the current global COVID-19 pandemic, tomorrow's session may draw attention to the impact of the pandemic on women in conflict situations. Of particular concern is the consequences on women of the adverse impacts of COVID19. Women are disproportionately affected from its negative impacts on peace processes and on social and political stability and from its role in exacerbating existing drivers and causes of conflicts and in disrupting access to protection measures in conflict settings including humanitarian assistance.

The expected outcome of the session is a press statement. The PSC could highlight the various advances made in the implementation of resolution 1325 in enhancing the role of women, introducing policy and institutional measures, the role of women organizations and awareness. It could also expression appreciation to the progress made in institutionalizing the WPS agenda in the work of the PSC and the AU. Despite these, it could also note that there are still critical areas that

require further work. It may underscore the critical role of increasing the active and direct role of women in peace processes and decision-making. The PSC could call on Member States to adopt 1325 NAPs and allocate sufficient budget for the implementation of the plans. It may call on Member States to strengthen their accountability and justice mechanisms to allow effective investigation and justice for sexual violence committed against women and girls. The PSC may reiterate its previous request to the Commission to prepare the report that evaluates the implementation of its previous decisions to undertake a stocktaking exercise and to assess the level of implementation. In order to consolidate the WPS agenda within the PSC, it may encourage the Special Envoy and the AU Commission to enhance coordination of various AU institutions and programs working on this theme.